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his interest in his work and exposes his opinions and feelings about matters grave and trifling; so that one is able to see him quite fully as he appeared to an intimate friend.

For the most part the portraiture in the volume is much more casual; but the chapters, especially upon George Wyndham, John O'Mahoney and John O'Leary, are remarkable for the completeness and intimate reality of the impressions produced. Only a friend who is also a novelist and poet could write quite as Katharine Tynan has done in these instances. One has never known much, perhaps, of John O'Mahoney, and one may never expect to know more of him than the author has told in this book; yet this man will always remain in one's memory a noble, gracious, and affording personality, like a character out of a favorite novel.

Indeed, it is really as a novel, veraciously and graciously picturing life, that one reads *The Middle Years*. The story is a true one, of course, but its spirit is more important than its facts. Even in the fuller portraits, what one thinks of is friendship and character, rather than the details of the picture. Every person named is made to seem more interesting in himself than anything that is told about him. The anecdotes, too, like those of good fiction, are not merely smart or informing, but of a memorable human quality. "Why didn't you go to the curate?" said an old priest somewhat annoyed with a man who had aroused him late at night for a sick call. "Well, your Reverence," was the reply, "you see 'tis the way this poor woman has a trifle of money and I thought I'd see yourself first." "Sit down there now," said the priest, "till I get out the decanter, and you'll have a glass, and then with the blessing of God, we'll be going about our duty." This tale of John O'Mahoney's, told in no spirit of irreverence, surely, or of disrespect for the priesthood, is simply and delightfully human. The priests who figure in Katharine Tynan's narrative, it may be remarked, are all understandingly and affectionately portrayed. So are the children. Priests and children, great men and small, people of the larger social world and "Dickens persons," all are described in *The Middle Years* with the same verity and engaging charm. The book conveys the atmosphere and views of a wide literary circle, and it brings one into the very spirit of the Celtic movement; but it is to be prized rather as a novel, for its human and literary value, than as a chronicle for its facts and opinions, or, as a book of personal opinions, for its brilliance.

THE FORD. BY MARY AUSTIN. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917.

One would say that there is enough originality of a really valuable kind in Mary Austin's new novel to supply at least two uncommonly interesting stories. Strength of imagination, surprising

beauty, and clearness of expression in particular passages, these are qualities that continually fascinate the reader of *The Ford*. And yet for some reason one feels that the novel as a whole might be more effective than it is. The sense of bigness throughout the story is so strong and seems so genuine that one is disappointed at not receiving in the end a more definite impression.

The Ford is the story of how a young Californian came to manhood and "found himself." Kenneth Brent is the son of a ranchman in Tierra Longa—a man of rather superior parts and one who loves the land. Kenneth's mother, an affectionate but temperamentally discontented woman, craves escape from what is to her a painfully narrow way of life. Oil is discovered at Summerfield, and Stephen Brent, discouraged by the certainty of drought, sells his ranch and invests his money in oil claims. There would have been no drought if the ranchers had resorted to irrigation, for there was plenty of water in the river, but the men of Tierra Longa were unable to get together, and they distrusted their ability to succeed without the co-operation of "Old Man" Rickart, the rich man of the region. Rickart is supposed to be interested in oil, and many of the ranchers follow his lead with a curious mixture of faith and suspicion.

Throughout the story the reader is made to feel strongly, though in a manner not easy to define, the subtle, compelling effect of social conditions, traditions, and habits. On one side there are the ranchers ruled by "the solitary, rural habit which admitted them to a community of beguilement, but could not lift them to a community of enterprise." On the other side there is the Old Man, with his large, selfish, necessary aims. And yet there is a fellow-feeling which tends to draw all together. The attitude of the Old Man toward the ranchers is half paternal; the feeling of the ranchers toward the Old Man is at bottom admiring and affectionate rather than hostile. And in the whole situation a vague community feeling is strangely mingled with strong individualism.

The same influences are at work among the little group of persons in whose lives the reader is made to feel a close personal interest. The children whom one meets in the first chapter—Kenneth Brent; his quiet, clever sister, Anne; Frank Rickart, the Old Man's son; Virginia Burke, daughter of the Old Man's overseer—are all quite obviously destined to be friends and lovers, yet each is governed by individual bias, strong and unchecked, and by an obscure class consciousness. Virginia, who could always make the others play her game, becomes eventually a labor agitator, histrionic, self-deceived, shallow, but very much alive and very alluring to the end. Anne develops into a business woman, so independent and so self-controlled that she is able completely to renounce her great love for Frank and yet to reveal it at a moment when just this sacrifice is needed to save her brother; womanly enough to do the

conventionally "unwomanly" thing; endowed with a feminine charm that wins the Old Man, and yet quite capable of beating him at his own game, Anne is the strongest and most attractive person in the story. She is, too, by many signs a person who could hardly have been produced in any other environment. Frank, precociously a man of the world, is as truly as the rest a product of those conflicting influences which are at work in the spirit of the time and place. Thoroughly the son of his father, he is, nevertheless, loyal, chivalrous, inspired, with no little of that essential generosity and largeness of soul which makes itself felt continually throughout the somewhat sordid struggles and half-blind spiritual gropings that mark the progress of the story. As for Kenneth, his original motive is to buy back the old ranch—the one thing left that can restore some measure of happiness and self-confidence to his father, for Stephen Brent has been almost crushed by the death of his wife, for which he feels himself responsible, and by the failure of those plans for wealth into which he has, through his example, led his neighbors. Kenneth accordingly, without the least thought of revenge, enters the employment of Old Man Rickart in order to learn the game. But as he goes on he finds that he is in his very nature not a money-maker, but a man of the land and of the people. Discovering a plan of Rickart's to divert the waters that might bring prosperity to *Tierra Longa* into the pipes of San Francisco, Kenneth resigns his position and sets out to thwart the Old Man, attempting to lead the people in a counter movement. The story of how he half failed and half succeeded, of how he found his true self in work and in love is a fine study in the ways of the soul and in the ways of life.

Industrial conditions, business intrigue, social reactions, and the temperaments of individuals are all constantly involved among the motives of this remarkable tale, and all are treated with knowledge, with insight, and with feeling. It is one's final impression, however, that the story as a whole fails to attain a quite sufficient unity and strength. It would seem, in the first place, that the author attempts rather too much in the way of weaving all the elements of experience together. There is rather too much interpretation, suggestion, description, feeling in each consecutive instant of the story. When life is thus presented, with too great an effort for truth, the effect may be unnatural or even distressing. And in the second place, it is not easy to feel the full force of that sense of bigness which pervades the story, because in the end this remains quite indefinite. What is the underlying spirit of the novel? This would be an irrelevant question, of course, if the story were merely a dispassionate picture of life. But the very force of the impression which the story does, after all, produce prevents one from so regarding it. The reader is roused as by an impassioned plea; he is stimulated to the point of being ready to change his whole outlook upon life, and yet in the

end he cannot tell whether the thing that has so impressed him is Providence or the brute forces of life or the spirit of California.

But if *The Ford* fails to be completely satisfying the dissatisfaction that it arouses is really a tribute to its power, and one must marvel at the degree of success which Mrs. Austin has attained in treating a broad and complex theme both comprehensively and minutely, both psychologically and epically.

MY REMINISCENCES. By RABINDRANATH TAGORE. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917.

If one has been somewhat baffled by the poetry of Tagore, unable to share fully in the rather widespread enthusiasm for it as for a kind of revelation, one will not be greatly helped by the poet's recently published volume of reminiscences. Tagore's poetry has to be taken simply, naturally, without too much search for recondite meanings. The like is true of his short stories—fascinating in their varied charm, but unprofitable as subjects of analysis. And the reminiscences are in this respect upon a par with the author's stories and poetry.

Certain elements of poetic temperament and experience are, indeed, clearly discernible in these autobiographic chapters. One notes, for example, that in Tagore, the preservation of the child mind into mature life is a phenomenon more nearly complete and less obstructed than is usual even in men of poetic genius. One is impressed, too, by the fact that a longing for freedom and a curiosity about the mysteries that lie back of ordinary bounds, the bounds of the immediate environment or the bounds of reality, developed very early in his life and continued to be strong. "How intimately did the life of the world throb for us in those days!" he writes. "Earth, water, foliage, and sky, they all spoke to us and would not be disregarded. How often were we struck by the poignant regret that we could only see the upper story of the earth and knew nothing of its inner story." The same sense of wonder is expressed in passage after passage. The restrictions that were indispensable in the bringing-up of a high-caste Bengali boy, stimulated this curiosity and set up a reaction toward freedom of thought. As a child, Tagore was physically much confined. In his youth the lack of opportunity for action led him with others to seek excitement in a harmless but very mysterious and fervent political association—the object of which was really to let loose the imagination and emotion of its members. Of this experience Tagore remarks: "There can be no doubt that closing up all outlets and barring all openings to a faculty so deep-seated in the nature of man, and moreover so prized by him, creates an unnatural condition favorable to degenerate activity." One may gather in such accounts some notion of how the author's conception of poetry, and of a wider life for his countrymen, was